

3rd of November it is

The 3rd of November 2008 was the date on our one-way flight tickets from Frankfurt to San Francisco. That's the date on which Marion, Jill and I waved our friends goodbye, and on which we hugged our parents with tears flowing. It's the date on which Jill just was 4 years old and did not understand what the hell was going on. The 3rd of November was the most surreal day of our lives, full of ups and downs of excitement and emotions.

Just a couple of days before that particular date, we celebrated a goodbye party in an apartment where we used to live temporarily while we sold our house. The stuff we wanted to keep was already on its way through the Panama Canal, in a wooden 8x8x10 box. Some stuff we couldn't sell was auctioned to our friends under heavy tequila influence at the party. They supported us that way, because actually nobody needs a broken hand mixer. It was a hilarious party in that now-empty apartment, but there was always a cloud over it, with our friends looking in our eyes and asking a virtual "Are you fuckin' serious?!" and "When are you coming back?!". In the morning, or more accurately in the middle of the hangover, the answer was confirmed and clarified...there was nothing that could stop us.

Until then it was a rocky road. Since October 2006 we were carrying the secret in our hearts that we were planning to leave Germany forever and that we had applied for a U.S. Green Card. You have no idea what needs to be done to get that document. How many forms we needed to fill out, attestations to get, \$2,000 to spend, sweat and blood to give in physical exams, until we finally stood in the American Embassy in Frankfurt to swear by God to do good for the spirit and the flag of the United States...and nobody else knew about that!

That secret was burning on our tongues like a thousand jalapeños, which later felt like a million as we finally had the Green Cards in our pockets. That whole thing took one and a half years and we began to sell everything we could, actually without being 100% sure that we really wanted to do this. House, cars, jobs to cancel, moving and whatever...nobody knew about that except our family doctor. He did the "math" when we showed up and asked for shots you actually don't need in Europe but do in order to get Green Cards for the U.S.. So we got them and paid all this just to keep up the chance to begin a new life. The alternative was to live in regret not to have tried it. We encouraged ourselves with "Who says we can't go back if we fail over there, but at least we can say that we had tried".

One and a half years, Marion and I were sitting in an emotional rollercoaster. I mean... we wasn't 20 years old, were you just jump up with a 'Yeehaa', were no responsibilities giving any restrictions to you. No... we developed a life, careers, a family, with all the stuff comes along with it. So yeah, that makes you not feeling good with it all the time, and Marion and me had each morning differences for a solution: "This is crazy and not realistic!", or "Oh my God, we go to America!". Sometimes I just sat there and stare on my GC, which has a very small image of Mrs. Liberty and the flag on its back. You can't imagine what that symbol and the flag means to me! Finally we gave it in God's hands "If we can sell the house, God want we do it!" ... the house was sold in a month!

So yes, friends and relatives asked questions, but there was always a way to explain things. Why did we decide not to tell this to anybody? Well, there were a couple of reasons; we needed to keep our jobs as long as we could; we wouldn't have any influence on our decision; we wouldn't have somebody things we were stupid; it would make no sense to tell somebody if we're not 100% sure ourselves. Finally our decision was made and we told our parents first. As we did, we realized how good it was to keep it for us.

Two weeks before we left, our friends became aware of our impending departure through the invitations for the party. The closest friends were notified via phone or face to face. There was therefore no “☺ sure man, you’re kiddn’”, because it was reality and our flight on November 3rd was already booked. But even though some followed us to the airport, they still had a doubt on their minds that we were really doing this. At 2pm we lifted off in an American Airlines 747 to a country where millions of emigrants had already found their homes and dreams. Yes, our doubts were still lingering but the excitement was pushing them away. We really did this, and that filled us with endless pride, but we were scared though. Touchdown was 11 hours later at 9 Pacific Time.

It was 1996 when we discovered California, and that the country and its people matched our ideals and mentality more than elsewhere in the world. We fell in love with all this and the dream was born to make it there. I remember how crestfallen we were because we realized that this is might be the first dream we maybe couldn’t make come true. Well, God has a good sense for humor, hasn’t he! ☺

The oversea box arrived at Martina and Pat’s house, which we met on an emigrant forum on the Internet. They are adorable people we are pleased to call our friends today. However, the first 3 months were really hard, and jobs were out of reach. That changed for a moment for an unpleasant job I did for a month in San Francisco. We stayed in a lovely town in the East Bay and began to learn to live in an American community. Marion got a job as a cashier and worked for California minimum wage. You should know that she was a chief secretary back in Germany and had to learn a lot to do this. Same with me. I made a hell of a lot of money as a purchasing agent, but I wasn’t happy. In addition to that we gave up the very generous social security in Germany, good health care, and 150 Euros per month just for having a child. So don’t you dare to think we came here with financial motivations; we came here for love and a passion. This is our 3rd year in this great country, which isn’t perfect, but especially this is why it is what it is and that makes it so special. So please stick to your inches and ounces, even though I hate it ☺

In only 3 years we rebuilt our lives completely new, and this was and is everything else but easy. There are a couple of things you can’t organize when you’re thousands of miles away. Such a simple thing like an apartment...which you can’t rent when you don’t have a bank account...which you can’t get when you have no driver’s license...which you can’t get when you don’t have at least an apartment. So you can’t put a child in preschool if you don’t have a home. You can’t buy a car because you can’t get insurance without a driver’s license. Yeah, you’re laughing, but that’s not easy at all if you aren’t a native speaker. Getting the driver’s license was basically our first English language challenge.

I remember how we started to teach Jill the English language as we decided to leave. That little girl could communicate after 4 months in the U.S. already. Today, she’s 7 years old and ahead of us without any accent. Now she has a U.S. English accent in her German, which is hell of funny, and I hardly can hold back from laughing my head off. She’s reading chapter books back and forth and her teacher couldn’t believe she’s not a native. Marion is trying to keep her talking German, but I am chatting English only with her. Her cowgirl hat and boots say it loud and clear; she’s an American girl. We’re nothing but proud of and for her!

After almost one year sleeping on an air mattress, my job situation required changing something, and I founded the company ‘Superbike-Coach Corp’ on my birthday. I trained riders all over Europe as an additional job, but now I do it full time. Money isn’t that important anymore, because I love what I am doing and the way we live. My book ‘Racers-Story ...25 seconds...’ is in the translation process at this

time, and I can't wait to tell you this story. I am working hard and late at night to make things happen, but it's worth it every second. Same with Marion-- she still has a part time job, but to get back on track she goes to College for Accounting. That's already tough enough, but try doing it in a language you only know about 80%! Marion is studying very hard to achieve this. Her reward...A's and B's...that's passion and will power, isn't it?!

I can't speak for Marion and Jill now, but if you'd ask me what I miss the most in Germany (besides friends and parents), basically it's the metric system and bratwurst. What I do not miss is a much longer list, but I'll keep that for myself and will tell it to somebody while drinking a beer. No, I don't miss German beer or the Autobahn. In the US I'm enjoying watching NFL football in a sports bar and hearing the heartbeat of my V8 pickup truck while cruising the highway.

All this is actually told in a time lapse where many of the details are missing. But we did this all by ourselves. That, and having a strong goal, has helped us to stay together.

That and some other things are perhaps learned in Pro Motorsports... to be consequent, to control what seems out of control, to never give up, to have a dream and make it into a goal, having ideals. If you do all of those things, you should check if you also have a passion. Today, the 3rd November has become a meaningful date for us, and will be a family holiday forever.



by Can Akkaya, Nov 3rd 2011

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